THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b) The Variations between budget estimates and net receipts of excise duty in the year 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 were (—) 3.7% and (—) 11.1%. The shortfall is attributable, *inter alia*, to sluggishness in industrial production in certain critical sectors of the economy and increase in the exemption limit for excise duty on small scale industries from Rs. 50 lakhs to Rs. 1 crore.

Pending cases of customs and excise

2129. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of disputes relating to customs and excise has shot up to more than 10,000 during the last three years; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the steps propsed to be taken to reduce the number of arrears relating to these cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Statement I, II and III attached in respect of pending of Central Excise cases, customs cases and cases pending before Commissioner (Appeals) respectively. (*See* below).

(b) Pendency in December, 2001 is around the same as that of December, 1999, so, no specitic reason is attributable for the same. Liquidating arrears of cases is a continuing process involving reforms in the tax structure, simplifying laws and procedures, setting up of new forums for disposal of cases, etc. It is Government's constant endeavour to bring down arrears of cases.

Statement-I

Pendency of Central Excise Cases in Supreme Court and High Courts

Year	Supreme Court	High Court	Cegat*
1999	1816	4697	32984
2000	2084	4649	28477
2001	1691	4676	29575

*In the case of CEGAT, figures are for both Customs & Central Excise cases.

Statement-II

Pendency of customs cases in Supreme Court and High Courts

Year	Supreme Court	High Court
1999	1163	8020
2000	487	5609
2001	443	5637

Statement-III

Pendency of Cases with Commissioner (Appeals)

Year	No.of cases
1999	37772
2000	40585
2001	40594

Expansion of LIC in rural and semi-urban areas

2130. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Life Insurance Corporation of India has formulated a strategy to grow its business in rural and semi-urban areas of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the scheme has been cleared by IRDA; and

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the guidelines issued by IRDA or corporate agencies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has informed that the life inusrance business in rural and semi-urban areas, at present, is being tapped through the LIC's Individual Assurance Plan namely New-Jan Raksha which is specially designed to meet the needs of the prospective policyholders of these areas. The Corporation has also been